



## JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF CALIFORNIA

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE  
OF THE COURTS

### Biographies

#### **California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care**

Posted: 2/2008

**Hon. Carlos R. Moreno, Chair to the Commission**, was sworn in as an associate justice of the Supreme Court of California in October 2001, following his nomination by Governor Gray Davis. Justice Moreno began his career as a deputy city attorney with the office of the City Attorney of Los Angeles, prosecuting criminal and civil consumer protection cases and handling politically sensitive and legislative matters as special counsel to the city attorney. He then joined the firm of Mori & Ota (now known as Kelley, Drye & Warren) in 1979, representing institutional clients in the firm's general commercial litigation practice.

In fall 1986, Governor George Deukmejian appointed Justice Moreno to the Municipal Court, Compton Judicial District, where he adjudicated criminal matters involving serious felony offenses and supervised the court's civil department. In October 1993, Governor Pete Wilson elevated Justice Moreno to the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, where he presided over felony trials for four years. Justice Moreno was then nominated to the federal bench by President Bill Clinton. In February 1998, he was unanimously confirmed to the U.S. District Court for the Central District of California by the Senate. Moreno served as a federal district court judge for three years, presiding over a broad range of complex civil and criminal matters.

Justice Moreno has served as president of the Mexican American Bar Association and has been a member of the California Judges Association, the Presiding Judges Association, and the Municipal Court Judges Association of Los Angeles County. He has served on the board of visitors of Stanford Law School and the board of governors of the Association of Yale Alumni. He is a director of the Arroyo Vista Family Health Center and a former president of the Yale Club of Southern California. In 1997, he received the Criminal Justice Superior Court Judge of the Year Award from the Los Angeles County Bar Association, and in 2001 he was presented with the For God, For Country and For Yale Award, given to distinguished alumni of Yale. He received a B.A. in political science from Yale in 1970 and a J.D. from Stanford Law School in 1975.

**Hon. Michael D. Antonovich** represents the 2 million residents of Los Angeles County's Fifth Supervisorial District in the San Gabriel, Pomona, San Fernando, Santa Clarita, and Antelope Valleys. Over the past 20 years, the supervisor has been a champion for the county's foster youth, working to promote adoption, and was honored by the National Association of Counties with its Counties Care for Kids Award. "The children aren't the future, they are today," says

Antonovich, a former high school teacher. “If we don’t meet their needs today, they will have no future.” Dedicated to ensuring that we have well-funded, professional law enforcement and emergency management agencies, he initiated many child and public safety programs, including the Child Abduction Regional Emergency (CARE) Alert program and the county’s innovative sex offender locator Web site. His HI-CAAP project targets repeat criminal illegal alien offenders, while the D.I.S.A.R.M. program, which he started, has seized thousands of weapons and millions of dollars in illegal drugs and drug money from convicted felons.

Mr. Antonovich serves on the board of the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and the South Coast Air Quality Management District. He is involved in countless community and civic activities, including the Tournament of Roses Committee, the Glendale Chamber of Commerce, the Los Angeles Zoo Association, and the Good Shepherd Lutheran Home for Retarded Children. He is also a member of Sigma Nu Fraternity and serves on the board of the San Gabriel Valley Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush appointed him to numerous presidential committees and commissions.

As a government and history teacher for the Los Angeles Unified School District in 1966, Mr. Antonovich credits his own high school teacher for the inspiration to enter public life; he was elected to the city’s Community College board of trustees in 1969 and in 1972. He served in the California State Assembly until 1978 and has served the people of Los Angeles County as a member of its board of supervisors since 1980.

**Hon. Karen Bass** was elected in November 2004 to represent the 47th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Los Angeles and Culver City, as well as the communities of Ladera Heights, Baldwin Hills, View Park, Cheviot Hills, Westwood-UCLA, and Windsor Hills.

Prior to her election to the Assembly, Ms. Bass had a long and distinguished career as a public advocate. While working as a physician’s assistant in the emergency room at L.A. County USC Hospital, she witnessed the ravages of crack cocaine on inner-city residents. Resolving to reverse the tragic local trends, she founded Community Coalition to improve the quality of life in South Los Angeles and served as its executive director for 14 years. Under her leadership, the coalition eliminated or converted dozens of local liquor stores, closed motels known as drug trafficking centers, improved the quality and selection of foods in local supermarkets, and secured millions of dollars in repairs to local schools. As a stalwart community activist and educator, she has received many awards in recognition of her efforts.

Ms. Bass also served on the Los Angeles City Council Ad Hoc Committee on Gangs, Youth, and Violence, which founded the L.A. Bridges after-school gang prevention program. She played a key role in several community initiatives beyond the Community Coalition, including Friends of Crenshaw/Dorsey Community, Workplace Hollywood, the Human Services Alliance, African-American Voter Representation Education Program, Liberty Hill Foundation, and Homeless Health Care.

Ms. Bass was raised in the Venice/Fairfax neighborhood. She earned a bachelor's degree in health sciences from California State University at Dominguez Hills and a physician's assistant certification from the University of Southern California School of Medicine.

**Hon. Richard C. Blake** is the chief judge of the Hoopa Valley Tribal Court, located in Humboldt County, having been elected to the position in June 2002. A Hoopa tribal member, he resides on the Hoopa Reservation. The tribal court was established approximately 30 years ago and is viewed nationally as a model court for native tribes. The court hears a dozen types of cases. Prior to being elected chief judge, Judge Blake was employed with Solano County Probation for 15 years, where he worked in both adult and juvenile probation field services, including intensive supervision, juvenile placement, and gang field services. He also has a POST certificate and has worked in law enforcement/police agencies.

A graduate of the University of Southern California in 1985 and a master's graduate from the same university in 1996, Judge Blake has continued his law education at the National Judicial College at the University of Nevada at Reno. Judge Blake has experience in juvenile foster care, being a juvenile placement officer with Solano County Probation for several years. As chief judge, he frequently deals with issues of foster care. He is an executive board member of the National American Indian Court Judges Association, elected by judicial peers nationwide, and a Region II board member, representing tribal courts in California, Nevada, and Utah. He also sits on the Recruiting Rural Parents for Indian Children advisory council.

Judge Blake is the founder of a tribal court coalition, consisting of professionals working in developed and developing tribal courts in Northern California. A vision that began with 3 tribal courts now serves over 11 tribal courts in various stages of development. In addition to fulfilling his duties as chief judge, Judge Blake also volunteers time with numerous youth activities, providing positive activities for the youth in his community. He has recently started to learn his native language (Hupa) and has participated in ceremonial dances.

**Lawrence B. Bolton** is Chief Counsel and Deputy Director for the Legal Division of the California Department of Social Services. Responsible for supervising 190 legal staff who provide support for California's Human Service programs including TANF, Food Stamps, In-Home Supportive Services, Adoptions, Child Welfare Services, Foster Care, SSI/SSP, the Community Care Licensing Program, including day care centers, family day care homes, adoption agencies, foster family agencies, foster group homes, and social rehabilitation facilities, the Office of Child abuse Prevention; and Adult Services.

Mr. Bolton is past President of the American Association of Public Welfare Attorneys (AAPWA). He has previously been appointed by the Chief Justice of California to the Judicial Task Force on Court/Community Outreach, and has served as a member of the Sacramento County Grand Jury. He has spoken on Child Welfare issues at the National Licensing Institute, the American Bar Association, and has served as Legal Education Instructor on Child Abuse for

the California District Attorneys Association, as well as a consultant to the California Attorney General's Child Abuse Commission. He is the recipient of the Distinguished Service Award from the California Consortium for the Prevention of Child Abuse.

Mr. Bolton is a graduate of Santa Clara University and the University of California, Davis School of Law.

**Curtis Child** joined The Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC) as the director of the Office of Governmental Affairs in January 2007, which represents the judicial branch on legislative, policy, and budget matters. Immediately prior to joining the AOC he was the Principal Consultant to the Assembly Human Services Committee where he analyzed legislation on child welfare, foster care and developmental disabilities. Previously he was a Senior Attorney at the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL) where he lobbied the California Legislature on issues impacting poor, abused, and neglected children. Prior to that he was appointed by Governor Davis in 2000 to serve as the first director of the newly-created California Department of Child Support Services where he oversaw for nearly five years the restructuring of the California child support program and the annual collection and distribution of more than \$2.3 billion in child support payments. He also served as the Principal Consultant to the Assembly Human Services Committee in the late 1990s where he worked on California's welfare and child support reforms. Prior to joining the Human Services Committee he was an attorney for twelve years with various legal services programs where he litigated and advocated on health, disability, welfare and child support issues. He received his J.D. degree in 1984 from McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento.

**Miryam J. Choca** started her career as child and family therapist and school psychologist at a residential treatment center, testing children and working with parents, teachers and caretakers to develop successful home and school-based interventions.

She currently works as Senior Director, California Strategic Consultation, for Casey Family Programs (CFP), a privately funded national operating foundation whose 2020 goals include working in partnership to safely reduce the number of children in foster care by 50% by 2020 and to improve foster care outcomes in education, employment and mental health. Previously, she directed Casey offices in Tucson and San Diego.

Prior to her work with Casey, Ms. Choca focused on public and private social service administration and program development. She was Operations Manager for Arizona's Administration for Children, Youth and Families, with oversight for all centralized child welfare functions—budget, planning, policy, licensing, contracts, information systems, training and adoption subsidy, and later also administered Arizona's Office of Children's Behavioral Health. As Vice-president of Human Development at Chicanos Por La Causa, an Arizona community development corporation, Ms. Choca developed and implemented a model demonstration teen pregnancy and parenting program, residential and outpatient substance abuse programs and outpatient mental health services.

Ms. Choca is particularly interested in work which improves outcomes for children and families of color and in the development of functional public private partnerships which improve child welfare outcomes. She currently serves on the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care and on the California Child Welfare Council.

**Joseph W. Cotchett** is one of the Nation's best trial lawyers and The National Law Journal has called him one of the 100 Most Influential Lawyers in America. He is the senior partner at Cotchett, Pitre & McCarthy.

In the 1970s, Mr. Cotchett brought environmental lawsuits to save the California coast along with consumer actions which are our present consumer laws in California. In the 1980s, he won multi-million dollar verdicts for investors in white-collar fraud cases.

In the 1990s, Mr. Cotchett was the trial lawyer in the Lincoln Savings & Loan case - involving Charles Keating. He won one of the largest jury verdicts then recorded on behalf of 23,000 elderly citizens - \$3.3 billion.

He has authored numerous books on law, ethics, and the environment. He has an engineering degree from California Polytechnic State University and a J.D. from the University of California Hastings College of Law. He serves on numerous boards and several State Commissions. He was a former Colonel in the Army Reserves in both JAG and Airborne Special Forces.

His Cotchett Foundation has contributed to numerous children's causes including assisting teachers to work with inner city children on math and science programs. His other work with children's education centers on teaching children the court system in California.

**Michael Cunningham** has had a long and varied career in health and human service policy, administration and program development. Michael is currently the Chief Deputy Director for the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs. He is responsible for operational management of the Department's programs and services. Michael has more than 30 years of experience in managing, directing and consulting with agencies regarding alcohol and other drug prevention and treatment programs. He has held management positions in agencies and organizations addressing critical health and human service issues and problems at the local, state and national levels. Michael possesses extensive experience and expertise in assessing, developing, disseminating, and applying public health and social services knowledge and research-based practices for agencies and organizations at all levels. He is highly skilled in the design, implementation and evaluation of culturally appropriate alcohol and other drug abuse prevention and treatment policies and systems. Michael received his Bachelors of Arts degree in Political Science from California State University Los Angeles and Masters of Arts in Government from Claremont Graduate University.

**Hon. Kathryn Doi Todd, J.D.**, 1970, was appointed to be an associate justice of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Two, in August 2000, after serving over 20 years as a trial court judge in Los Angeles. She was named to the city's municipal court in 1978 and to its superior court in 1981, where her first assignment was as a Juvenile Court judge.

Justice Todd served as presiding judge of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court from 1988 to 1989. She has also served as a member of the California Judicial Council, the council's advisory committees on Juvenile Court Law and on Gender Bias in the Courts, the board of trustees of the California Judges Foundation, as chair of the board of trustees of the Los Angeles County Law Library, and as chair of the board of the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center.

**Jill Duerr Berrick, MSW, Ph.D.**, is co-director of the Center for Child and Youth Policy and Professor in the School of Social Welfare at the University of California, Berkeley. Dr. Berrick conducts research on various topics concerning child welfare with a special emphasis on enlisting the voices of children and families' lived experiences of the system. Dr. Berrick has authored or coauthored nine books on child abuse, foster care, and family poverty, and has written extensively for academic journals. Her upcoming title, *Take Me Home*, is forthcoming with Oxford University Press.

**Hon. Leonard P. Edwards** is a Judge-in-Residence with the Center for Families, Children & the Courts (CFCC) at the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Judge Edwards has been employed by the AOC since June 2006. Judge Edwards is a retired judge from the Superior Court of Santa Clara County. In that capacity he has served as supervising judge of the family court and presiding judge of the juvenile court. He most recently served as supervising judge of the juvenile dependency court. Judge Edwards has been active locally and nationally in juvenile and family law. He is the founder and past president of the Juvenile Court Judges of California and has served on the California Judicial Council. He is a past president of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges. He has taught juvenile and family law at the University of Santa Clara Law School, Stanford Law School, and at the California Judicial College. Judge Edwards has also written widely in juvenile and family law. He and his wife have written a book entitled *Child Abuse and the Legal System*. Judge Edwards has been given many awards both locally and nationally. He recently was named Jurist of the Year by the California Judicial Council, and was given the 2004 William H. Rehnquist Award for Judicial Excellence.

**Raul A. Escatel** is currently Tax Counsel for the California Franchise Tax Board. Prior to joining the FTB, Mr. Escatel was a staff attorney for Sacramento Child Advocates where he served as minors' counsel in juvenile dependency proceedings. Before attending law school, Mr. Escatel worked as a Child Social Worker for the Los Angeles Department of Children and Family Services. Mr. Escatel was involved in establishing a mentoring program for youth placed in group homes and also helped provide parenting classes for non-English speaking families.

Mr. Escatel also currently works with Aspira Foster Family Agency, where he assists children with developmental disabilities and behavioral issues and their families, helping them to integrate into their communities and provide assistance with coping with the various issues surrounding social issues within the family. Mr. Escatel attended the University of California, Berkeley and California State University, Stanislaus where he received a degree in Psychology/Criminal Justice, cum laude in 1997. He earned his law degree from the University of Pacific, McGeorge School of Law in 2002. He received an LL.M from Boston University School of Law in 2003.

**Deborah Escobedo** has been a staff attorney at the Youth Law Center since November 2005. She had been an education advocate for 15 years, involved in litigation and both administrative and legislative advocacy on education equity issues, in particular those involving the rights of language minority and immigrant children. She has extensive experience litigating statewide issues impacting California's immigrant communities, including legal challenges to statewide anti-immigrant initiatives, such as Proposition 187 (*Pedro A. v. Dawson*) and Proposition 227 (*Angel v. Davis*). She was lead counsel in *Pazmino v. California Board of Education*, one of the first successful cases brought under the federal No Child Left Behind Act.

Ms. Escobedo received the National Hispanic Bar Association Award for Excellence in Public Service in 1998, the San Francisco Minority Bar Coalition Unity Award in 1997, and the California La Raza Lawyers Association Cruz Reynoso Community Service Award in 1992. She has also received numerous awards from education-related organizations for her advocacy on behalf of language minority children. She currently serves as cochair of San Francisco's Immigrant Rights Commission. She received her J.D. from Boalt Hall School of Law in 1979.

**Hon. Terry B. Friedman** is a Judge on the Los Angeles Superior Court, sitting in a civil law assignment. In 2000-01 Judge Friedman was the Presiding Judge of the Los Angeles Juvenile Court and in 1997-99 was the Supervising Judge of the Los Angeles Dependency Court. He currently serves on the Judicial Council and is a past president of the California Judges Association (2005-06) and past president of the Juvenile Court Judges of California. Prior to his election to the bench, Judge Friedman was a member of the California State Assembly from 1986-94. Judge Friedman has taught dependency law to state juvenile court judges and has been an adjunct law professor at UCLA, USC, Loyola and Pepperdine law schools. Judge Friedman is a graduate of Boalt Hall School of Law and University of California Los Angeles.

**Robert E. Friend** is the Director of the California Permanency for Youth Project (CPYP). Mr. Friend has worked in the field of child welfare for over 25 years. He has been a direct line worker and manager in residential treatment, a family reunification worker for Alameda County Social Services, a social worker and manager for Casey Family Programs, and the Assistant Regional Director for Aspira. Mr. Friend's primary areas of focus have been practice improvement and initiatives that promote permanence and economic independence for foster

youth. He has a bachelor's degree in psychology from Rutgers University and a master's in social welfare from the University of California.

**Hon. Richard D. Huffman** is an associate justice for the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division One. He was appointed in 1988 following his three-year tenure as a superior court judge for San Diego County. Before his appointment to the bench, Justice Huffman served as a deputy attorney general for 5 years, as chief deputy district attorney for over 10 years, and as assistant district attorney for the remainder of his 14 years of service with the San Diego County Office of the District Attorney.

He has been a member of the Judicial Council since 1996 and currently chairs its Executive and Planning Committee and serves as a member of the Litigation Committee.

**Hon. Susan D. Huguenor** has served as presiding judge of the Juvenile Court of San Diego County since 2003, hearing juvenile dependency cases 7 years prior to that. She was appointed to the Superior Court of San Diego County by Governor Wilson in 1996 and in 1998 was elected to the bench. Judge Huguenor served as a municipal court judge in El Cajon from 1985 to 1996, having been appointed in 1985 and elected in 1988, 1994, and 2004. She was presiding judge in 1988 and assistant presiding judge in 1987 of the El Cajon Municipal Court. She was San Diego's deputy city attorney from 1974 to 1985 (deputy in charge of the consumer fraud unit 1978–1985) and a trial deputy in the criminal division from 1974 to 1976. Previously, she taught elementary school for three years.

Judge Huguenor has been a member of the California Judges Association since 1985. She received her B.A. in Spanish literature from Monmouth College in Illinois and her J.D. from the California Western School of Law in San Diego.

**Terri Kook** is senior program officer for the child welfare program at the Stuart Foundation, where she oversees all aspects of grant making to strengthen the child welfare systems in both California and Washington. Ms. Kook brings to her work 19 years of experience as a child welfare worker, administrator, trainer, and educator. Before joining the Stuart Foundation three years ago, she was the chief of child welfare in Stanislaus County, taught part time in the Master of Social Work program at California State University, Stanislaus, and provided training at the state and national level on family group decision making.

Ms. Kook holds a B.A. in sociology from CSU, Stanislaus, and an M.S.W. from San Jose State University. She is a member of the National Advisory Committee for Family Group Decision Making with the American Humane Association.



**Miriam Aroni Krinsky** is a Special Consultant on Policy, Reform and Legislative Initiatives for the California Judicial Council. She previously served as the Executive Director of the Children's Law Center of Los Angeles, a nonprofit organization that represents over 20,000 abused and neglected youth, as President of the Los Angeles County Bar Association, and as President of the Los Angeles City Ethics Commission; taught law school at the University of Southern California Law Center and Loyola Law Schools; and practiced at the L.A. firm of Hufstedler, Miller, Carlson & Beardsley and as an Assistant United States Attorney in the Central District of California (acting as Chief of that office's Appellate and General Crimes Sections). She currently sits on the ABA Youth At Risk Commission, as well as various other federal, state and local policy committees and has testified extensively before legislative, governmental and judicial bodies and lectured nationwide on criminal law, child welfare, and appellate issues.

**Amy Lemley** is the policy director of the John Burton Foundation for Children Without Homes, a nonprofit organization founded by former California State Senate President Pro Tempore John Burton in 2004. The foundation is dedicated to improving the quality of life for California's homeless children and developing policy solutions to prevent homelessness. In her role as policy director, Ms. Lemley is responsible for developing and implementing the legislative, regulatory, and administrative strategies to achieve the goals of the foundation. Prior to joining the John Burton Foundation, Ms. Lemley was the executive director and cofounder of the First Place Fund for Youth, based in Oakland, California. First Place provides safe, affordable housing and supportive services to former foster youth in the Bay Area. It was named a model program by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Housing and Urban Development. Ms. Lemley earned her bachelor's degree from the University of Chicago and her master's degree in public policy from the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California at Berkeley. She received the Alumni of the Decade Award from the Goldman School of Public Policy in 2000 and the Manhattan Institute Social Entrepreneurship Award in 2003.

**Will Lightbourne** has worked in the human services field for 30 years and is director of the Social Services Agency of Santa Clara County, a position he has held since 2000. He previously served as director of the San Francisco Department of Human Services and the Santa Cruz County Human Services Agency. Before his involvement with public social services, he was the director of Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of San Francisco, the Bay Area's largest private human services agency.

Among his other activities he sits on the board of the California Budget Project, and served as president of the County Welfare Directors Association of California and as chair of the Bay Area Social Services Consortium.

**Hon. Bill Maze** was first elected in November 2002 to represent the 34<sup>th</sup> District, which includes the counties of Tulare, Inyo, Kern, and San Bernardino. Assemblyman Maze was reelected by greater than 70 percent of the voters in 2004. Since being elected, Assemblyman Maze has served on the Assembly Agriculture Committee, Budget Committee and the Health Committee.

He presently serves as Vice-Chair of the Committee on Water, Parks, and Wildlife, and the Business and Professions Committee, and most recently was reappointed to the Budget Committee, Subcommittee 1, Health and Human Services. The Assembly Speaker also appointed Assemblyman Maze to numerous Select Committees: Select Committee on Community Colleges, Select Committee on Domestic Violence, Select Committee on Aerospace, Select Committee on the Future Farming of CA, including serving as Vice-chair for the Select Committee on Foster Care. Prior to serving in the State Legislature, Assemblyman Maze was the former chairman and member of the Tulare County Board of Supervisors where he served for three terms (10 years). He is a U.S. Army veteran and graduated from California Polytechnic College in San Luis Obispo in 1968.

**Donna C. Myrow** is the executive director for *L.A. Youth*. Following the U.S. Supreme Court's 1988 *Hazelwood v. Kuhlmeier* decision, which allowed school administrators to censor student newspapers, Ms. Myrow conceived and launched *L.A. Youth*, a newspaper by and about teens. She planned and oversaw its growth into the most prominent youth publication in the country, with award-winning issues that serve a readership of 400,000 teens and adults throughout Los Angeles County. In 2003 she launched the Foster Youth Writing and Education Project to recruit and train youth to share their compelling personal stories with readers. She uses communication skills to serve as the voice of the publication with youth and other community organizations, educators, and policy makers and speaks nationwide about youth issues.

Ms. Myrow has taught elementary students in the Los Angeles area, developed a multicultural curriculum, and was an innovator in early childhood education. For the Watts Writers Workshop, founded by the noted author Budd Schulberg, she served as a teacher, writer, and editor. She has received honors as a Fellow of the Poynter Institute for Media, a Fellow of the Casey Journalism Center for Children and Families, and the Women of Outstanding Leadership Award of the YWCA of Greater Los Angeles. She received a B.A. in English literature from the University of California.

**Hon. Michael Nash** received his undergraduate degree from UCLA and his law degree from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. Prior to being appointed as a Municipal Court Judge in 1985, Judge Nash served as a Deputy Attorney General in the criminal division of the California Attorney General's Office where he handled criminal appeals and trials for over ten years. Judge Nash was elevated to the Superior Court in 1989 and has served in the Juvenile Court since 1990. Since 1995 he has served as either Presiding Judge of the Juvenile Court or Supervising Judge of the Dependency Court in Los Angeles. He is a past member of the California Judicial Council, Chair of the Juvenile Court Judges of California (JCJC), a member of the Board of Trustees of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), a member of the California Judicial Council's Family and Juvenile Advisory Committee, and a member of California's Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. Judge Nash has received numerous awards including being named Juvenile Court Judge of the Year by the Juvenile Court Judges of California in 1997 and 2006 Judge of the Year by the National CASA Association.

**David Neilsen** is the chief of the County Programs Implementation Section for the California Department of Mental Health. His unit is involved in a variety of program development issues, including children and adult policy development, program implementation efforts including the Mental Health Services Act, federal grants, program monitoring and technical assistance, and state level integration and collaboration efforts with other departments and disciplines.

He has spent over 30 years in public service, the majority of which can be described as working with the community programs that help children and adults with complex needs. His experiences include serving in the Peace Corp and as a VISTA volunteer, doing group home care for SED youth, juvenile probation, and drug and alcohol services at the community level. His tasks since being employed with CDMH include managing the youth suicide prevention project, participation on the state team implementing managed care within public mental health, state level integration pilots, and, for the last few years, focusing on the challenges and opportunities for improving the quality of children, youth, adult and family-based mental health services.

**Diane Nunn** is director of the Center for Families, Children & the Courts at the Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts (AOC). Before joining the AOC, she worked in a variety of positions in the Superior Court of Los Angeles County, including as director of its Reasonable Efforts Project, Juvenile Court referee, and juvenile hearing officer. She was also an attorney in private practice with special emphasis on family and criminal law and on domestic violence prevention and intervention. Before becoming an attorney, Ms. Nunn taught children in elementary and middle schools, in special education programs, and at county probation camp facilities.

As a member of the State Senate Task Force on Children and Youth, she participated in the redrafting of California's juvenile dependency law. She also served on other state task forces and advisory councils, including the Department of Justice Children's Justice Act Task Force, Senate Task Force on Family Relations Court, State Department of Education Surrogate Parent Task Force, Alliance for Endangered Children's Project, and the Governor's Adoption Policy Advisory Council.

**Ken Patterson** is director of the Stanislaus County Community Services Agency in Modesto. He is a native of Idaho who has spent his social work career in child welfare, family, and youth services around the West. He has designed and implemented practice models in public agencies that rely on understanding community values and family strengths. He views the family and community as the primary focus of practice attention. This orientation has led to lessened reliance on out-of-home care and stronger state/local partnerships in the states where he has held leadership positions. He frequently trains and consults on strategies for child welfare system reform.

Mr. Patterson is a member of the California Social Work Education Center board of directors, cochair for California County Welfare Directors Association Children's Services Committee, and vice chair for the Stanislaus County "birth to five" commission. He was awarded an Annie E. Casey Foundation Fellowship in 1995. He earned a bachelor's degree in social work from Boise State University and an M.S.W. from Eastern Washington University.

**Derek Peake** has worked with and on behalf of youth for over 25 years and in nonprofit management for the last 18 years. He is program director for the California Court Appointed Special Advocate Association (CalCASA), a position that focuses on improving the scope and quality of CASA advocacy throughout the state and on sharing the insights gained by CASA staff and volunteers with policy- and law-making bodies. Before he became involved with the CASA movement, Dr. Peake was the co-executive director of Quilombo, a youth leadership development organization he cofounded. He graduated from Princeton University with a degree in politics. In 2004, he received the Princeton Class of 1994's Bates Farnham Outstanding Achievement Award. He has been named a "Local Hero" by the San Francisco *Bay Guardian*, and was an Echoing Green Public Service Fellow. With his husband of 11 years, he has adopted three children out of the foster care system and is in the process of foster-adopting their fourth.

**Jonathan Pearson** is the Legislative and Policy Coordinator for California Youth Connection (CYC), a nonprofit advocacy organization of current and former foster youth. Since 1988, CYC has brought the voices of foster youth to legislators, administrators, juvenile court judges, care providers, social workers, and attorneys throughout California with the goal of improving the foster care system. With 28 county-based chapters and over 400 members, CYC works on the local, state, and national levels to educate legislators and policymakers about how policies and programs affect foster youth. As a former foster youth, Jonathan has both personal and professional experience with the issues facing foster children and youth in the child-welfare, educational, and mental health systems. Years of placement in foster families and group homes left him with firsthand knowledge of the need to reform the foster care system so that all children are offered safe, stable communities and the opportunity to grow up in a healthy family. Jonathan was fortunate enough to emancipate from the foster care system and be placed in Sacramento, California's first Transitional Housing Placement Program, the Laverne Adolfo Program. As a result of this and similar experiences Jonathan has seen personally the effects of positive advocacy and policy development for foster youth and takes joy in continuing this work. Jonathan previously has worked with Sacramento County Child Protective services as a youth advocate in helping that county implement their family-to-family model and system-improvement plan. Jonathan currently sits on the board of directors for the Foster Youth Education Fund, a nonprofit organization that distributes educational grants to foster youth pursuing higher education.

**Linda Penner** was appointed chief probation officer of Fresno County in April 2005. The Probation Department provides a broad range of services and programs for juvenile and adult

offenders, operates the Juvenile Hall and Elkhorn Juvenile Boot Camp, provides probation services to the superior court, and offers assistance to victims and witnesses of crimes. The department has over 600 employees, including deputy probation officers, juvenile correctional officers, and other professional and support staff, and operates on an annual budget in excess of \$50 million.

Ms. Penner is a lifetime resident of Fresno County and is a graduate of California State University at Fresno. She began her career with the Probation Department in 1977 as a victim/witness advocate and became a deputy probation officer in 1981. Her assignments in the DPO series included supervision of adult felons, oversight of a specialized adult sex offender caseload, court officer, and various juvenile programs. She was promoted to probation services manager in 1984 and was assigned the juvenile placement unit. She was elevated to division director in 1996; prior to her appointment as chief, she served as director of both the Juvenile and Adult Divisions. Through the years, Ms. Penner has been an active participant in numerous civic organizations and was recognized for her outstanding service to the community, both professionally and personally, as one of Fresno County's 10 Women of the Year in 2004. Additionally, she is on the faculty of the National Drug Court Institute.

As chief probation officer, she has spearheaded the construction of the new Juvenile Justice Campus, a \$146 million project that is near completion and slated to open within the next 90 days. It is the largest state-of-the-art juvenile justice facility in California. Its campus, the largest capital project ever undertaken by Fresno County, will serve as a national model for the furtherance of juvenile justice and will allow the Probation Department to benefit and serve the county's citizens for years to come.

**Anthony Pico**, who is 16 years old, is enrolled at the Center for Independent Study in San Francisco. He has been in the foster care system since birth and was adopted at the age of 12. Two years ago his adoptive mother died of cancer and he reentered the system. Mr. Pico is an avid member of the foster care advocacy movement and enjoys his involvement in California Youth Connection, a youth-run foster care advocacy organization. He has filled roles in the organization such as chair of the advisory board and youth liaison to the San Francisco chapter. He helped create the curriculum for the Rights Awareness Project, which teaches youth about their rights while in foster care and how to enforce them in a nonviolent manner. Outside of foster care advocacy he is involved with California politics. He is a member of other community organizations that have let him be a senator for a week, and also served as an attorney general in a mock trial. He aspires to graduate from a university, no matter what it takes, and vows to use his knowledge and experience to help others.

**Patricia S. Ploehn**, is director of the Los Angeles County Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), a department with an annual budget of more than \$1.5 billion and over 7,000 staff. Ms. Ploehn oversees all personnel, programs, facilities and services necessary for the administration of protective services, foster and out-of-home care, adoption and treatment for children in the Los Angeles County child welfare system. Appointed in September 2006, she is

the first director to be selected from within DCFS since its inception in 1984. Prior to this appointment she served as DCFS services deputy director.

Ms. Ploehn has served 29 years in the field of public child welfare field, beginning her career as a treatment counselor and then as a social worker and supervisor. She went on to serve in various administrative positions including Training and Education, Emancipation Services, Strategic Planning, Adoptions and Permanency Services.

Ms. Ploehn graduated from California State University at Los Angeles with a Bachelor Degree in Sociology and received a Master Degree in Social Work (MSW) from California State University at Long Beach. She is also a Licensed Clinical Social Worker (LCSW) in the State of California. Among her other activities, she serves on the California Child Welfare Council, the Executive Committee of the National Association of Public Child Welfare Administrators, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation's Urban Child Welfare Leaders.

**John F. O'Toole** has served for 26 years as the director of the National Center for Youth Law (NCYL), a nonprofit organization that advocates for poor children and youth. NCYL works in four principal areas: foster care/child welfare, juvenile justice, health and mental health, and public benefits. The Center spends the majority of its time and resources in pursuit of foster care reform. Under Mr. O'Toole's leadership, the Center has built a national reputation for its successful advocacy on behalf of tens of thousands of foster children in states throughout the country. Prior to joining NCYL, Mr. O'Toole was a staff attorney for California Rural Legal Assistance in Marysville, CA, where he was responsible for a broad range of individually oriented civil cases involving poverty law.

In 2004, Mr. O'Toole was named among California's 100 most influential attorneys by the *Daily Journal*, California's statewide legal newspaper. Mr. O'Toole currently sits on the board of Legal Services for Children in San Francisco. He earned his bachelor's degree from UCLA and his law degree from the University of California, Berkeley.

**Gary C. Seiser** is one of California's leading experts on juvenile dependency law and practice, and is a certified Child Welfare Law Specialist (National Association of Counsel for Children [NACC]). He has worked in the field for over 20 years, the first 5 of which were as a commissioner of the Superior Court of Riverside County, hearing juvenile dependency cases. A former prosecutor, he also served as a member of the Senate Bill 1195 task force that rewrote much of California's dependency law (SB 243, Stats. 1987, ch. 1485). Mr. Seiser is a supervising deputy with the Office of County Counsel, Juvenile Dependency Division, in San Diego and a member of the state advisory board for the NACC Child Welfare Law Attorney Certification Project. He has handled over 50 published appellate decisions, and coauthors *California Juvenile Courts Practice and Procedure* (Matthew Bender & Co.), California's leading treatise juvenile law and practice. His writing in that treatise has been cited by the Ninth Circuit Court of

Appeals, the California Supreme Court, and numerous California appellate courts. Mr. Seiser is a popular speaker at conferences throughout the state and has trained for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (Reno), the California Center for Judicial Education and Research, and the Public Child Welfare Training Academy, Southern California region.

**Alan Slater** is the Chief Executive Officer/Clerk of The Court and Jury Commissioner for the Superior Court of Orange County, a unified trial court, consisting of 144 judicial officers and over 1,700 employees. He has primary responsibility for all the administrative, nonjudicial functions of this metropolitan court serving a population of over 3 million people. He has served on a wide variety of state and national task forces and committees in the areas of judicial administration, court technology, and criminal justice integration. Mr. Slater served as an advisory member of the California Judicial Council for six years, from 2000 to 2006, and is a current member and past Chair of the Court Executives Advisory Committee. He is also a member of the Judicial Council's Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force, the Judicial Candidate Campaign Conduct Task Force, the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care, and the Trial Court Budget Working Group. He has served as faculty for numerous educational and professional training programs in judicial administration and court technology, with a special emphasis on electronic filing, document imaging, and privacy and public access. He holds Master's degrees in both Judicial Administration and Business Administration from the University of Southern California and a Bachelor's in Business Administration from Rutgers University.

**Joseph L. Spaeth** has graduated from Hamilton College in upstate New York. Following a stint in the U.S. Navy, he returned to Buffalo to attend law school at the State University of New York, where he received his J.D. degree in 1969. He began his career as a trial lawyer in 1973, joining the San Francisco Public Defender's Office. In July 1994, he retired from that office to become the Public Defender for Marin County.

He continues to have a strong interest in juvenile law, having managed the juvenile division of the San Francisco Public Defender's Office from 1983 to 1994. He is a past president of the California Public Defender's Association and was the public defender representative on the Family and Juvenile Law Advisory committee to the Judicial Council for over 10 years. He also serves Marin County as chair of the Employee Recognition Committee and has served on the Strategic Plan Steering and Implementation Committees.

Mr. Spaeth is strongly committed to seeking methods to prevent recidivism through the implementation of creative and innovative approaches to crime prevention, such as restorative approaches to justice and the therapeutic judicial treatment of underlying causes of criminal activity such as alcohol and drug abuse. To this end, he and his staff participate in several collaborative efforts, both within and outside the county.

**Hon. Dean T. Stout** is the Presiding Judge of the Superior Court of California, County of Inyo, and has served as a Superior Court judge since 1997. He was named the 2006 Wilmont Sweeney Juvenile Court Judge of the Year for California. Judge Stout is a member of the California Judicial Council's Family and Juvenile Law Advisory Committee, and also serves on the Judicial Council's Domestic Violence Practice and Procedure Task Force. He is chair of the California Judges Education & Research (CJER) Rural Courts Education Committee. Judge Stout previously served as the Assistant District Attorney for the County of Inyo, after serving as the Inyo County Public Defender.

**Jacqueline Thu-Huong Wong, M.S.W., PPSC**, is the Foster Youth Services Program Consultant for the California Department of Education, where she provides technical assistance and support services statewide in overseeing this grant-funded program designed to provide educational and school-based support services to children in foster care.

Jacqueline possesses a Master of Social Work degree and a Pupil Personnel Services credential. She is former Coordinator for the Oakland Unified School District's Student, Family and Community Services Department helping to develop the district's Foster Youth Program, Refugee Student Assistance Program, Migrant Education Program, various Coordination of Services Programs and Crisis Response protocols. She prides herself as a school-based social worker committed to comprehensive collaborations with a youth development focus.

Jacqueline's wealth of experience includes youth employment and training, mental health outreach, after-school tutoring services, educational enrichment programs, and wraparound services to at-risk families. As a former legislative aide to former California State Assembly member Mike Honda, she has expertise in legislative advocacy in the areas health and human services, mental health, employment and training, community economic development, and domestic violence. Jacqueline is also an active community volunteer dedicating her time and resources to a number of youth advocacy and outreach organizations including Young Women United for Oakland, the Asian Pacific Youth Leadership Project; and Banteay Srei (Citadel of Women) an empowerment program for sexuality exploited Southeast Asian American young women. She has been recognized for her work across diverse community settings and has been asked to participate in the facilitation of several multi-cultural awareness seminars.

***Contact:***

Judicial Council of California, Administrative Office of the Courts, California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care, [cbrc@jud.ca.gov](mailto:cbrc@jud.ca.gov)

***More resources:***

California Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care Web site: [www.courtinfoc.ca.gov/blueribbon](http://www.courtinfoc.ca.gov/blueribbon)